

have you retaken even a single inch of land from the Taliban," the letter suggested.

A third assertion was that previous U.S. administrations had cited the "prevention and eradication of narcotics" as a justification to "invade" Afghanistan, an inaccurate claim. But the letter correctly cited figures from the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime showing that opium poppy cultivation has "skyrocketed" in the 16 years since the military intervention and that the number of Afghan drug addicts has reached more than 3 million.

The overall message of these arguments was that the American people should make a "rational" assessment of the war effort, realize that it is backfiring and prevail upon their leaders to withdraw.

"You proclaim to be a developed and civilized nation," the letter said. "We leave it to your judgment to decide" whether the prevailing conditions of "insecurity, chaos" and soaring drug problems in Afghanistan constitute "reforms or crimes against humanity."

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, it is ironic because many of us in the House of Representatives do think and would agree with the Taliban: It is time to rethink the policy in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, I must have at least 35 or 40 posters that I have been using on the floor of the House for the last number of years. This one is of a woman who lost her husband, in tears, and the little baby girl sitting in her lap. She doesn't know why there is a man in a uniform kneeling before her mother with a folded flag.

There is just so much that we are missing as Members of Congress because we won't debate the war in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is a graveyard of empires. I think one day that Afghan graveyard is going to have a headstone that says, "USA," because we are going broke trying to fix a country that couldn't care less about our values and our system. But that is the way it works around here. You can't even get a debate on sending young men and women to die for this country.

Mr. Speaker, I ask Mr. RYAN to please let us have this debate. Members of Congress in both parties want to debate. You can vote for staying in Afghanistan, or you can vote for getting out of Afghanistan, but let us meet our constitutional responsibility.

I ask God to bless our men and women in uniform, and God to bless America.

#### YABUCOA AND VIEQUES, PUERTO RICO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Puerto Rico (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) for 5 minutes.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, as we speak today, the people of Puerto Rico continue to suffer. Currently, 200,000 families and businesses, 16 percent of the island, remain without power. That is not 6 days after the hurricane or 6 weeks. We are talking about 6 months.

For those still without power in Puerto Rico, they are now living

through the longest blackout in modern history.

While parts of the island are recovering, it is the rural, far-flung portions of the island that continue to suffer the most and where aid has been slowest to reach. For example, if you go to my hometown of Yabucoa, where Hurricane Maria made landfall, it looks like the hurricane struck yesterday. Two-thirds of the residents living there are without electricity.

For decades, Yabucoa's baseball stadium stood as an important symbol of that town's community. The people there love baseball, and the stadium was a community anchor, a symbol of the town and its people. Those who live in Yabucoa are proud of their baseball diamond, as this town fielded Puerto Rico's team in the 2017 Junior League World Series.

Today, the baseball stadium sits empty, now a symbol of how the people of Yabucoa struggle daily to survive. Meanwhile, basic services are hard to come by, with hospitals relying on generators to provide lifesaving treatment. Older, rural parts of Puerto Rico continue to suffer immensely.

Thirty miles east of Yabucoa's coast sits the island of Vieques. As an island off an island, Vieques also has been neglected, waiting for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to restore power.

Just a few weeks ago, I was there and I saw this on the road: power poles dangling from electric wires, just waiting to snap.

Can you imagine seeing that in the mainland United States?

Again, this is not 1 week or 2 weeks after the hurricane. It is close to 6 months later. Meanwhile, the island's connection to the main power grid has been cut off, and some workers think it will take years to fully restore the undersea cables.

Those are just two towns in a commonwealth of 3.3 million American citizens, but all across Puerto Rico there are rural areas that have been hit hard and are still suffering today.

We cannot afford to forget what has happened there. These are fellow American citizens. For 120 years they have fought, shed blood, and died in our wars, defending our freedoms. Now they need our help to recover from a humanitarian crisis.

I implore my colleagues, we must not forget Puerto Rico. We must allocate additional aid and help. We must rebuild Puerto Rico stronger and better than ever before. Until we do, we will be failing the people of Puerto Rico, we will be failing our fellow Americans.

#### SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KUSTOFF of Tennessee). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Speaker, last night, 406 of my colleagues and I voted to pass the STOP School Violence Act and the Securing Our Schools Act.

As a father of four, when I dropped each of my kids off at Jefferson Elementary School in Great Bend, Kansas, I felt confident that they were going to have a safe place where they could learn and grow; but, today, we have seen time and time again that we need to revisit how we are protecting our children.

The STOP School Violence Act will train students, teachers, faculty, and local law enforcement on ways to identify threats and report them. It goes back to the message we have been relaying for ages: see something, say something.

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This bill recognizes that sometimes our children and educators often do not have the training to spot some of the warning signs, and that is why it is critical that we provide training so students and personnel can recognize and report threats before they occur.

We also looked at ways to better our reporting process so that, when a threat is made, we have an effective way to log and intervene. To do so, this bill provides funding for States to upgrade their technology and develop an anonymous reporting system through a mobile app, hotline, and website. Not only does it allocate funds for violence, prevention training, and modernize our reporting protocols, it also allocates funds to improve school security equipment.

The STOP School Violence Act, coupled last night with the Securing Our Schools Act, grants funds for schools to install panic buttons and further hardening and protection of our schools. These are steps forward that approach the issue of school safety from several angles, and I am proud to have cosponsored both pieces of legislation.

I want to make sure that my message to everyone back home today is clear. The House of Representatives is listening, and our school grounds should no longer be soft targets. After last night's vote, the STOP School Violence Act and the Securing Our Schools Act joins the Fix NICS Act that has been waiting on a vote from the Senate since last December. Fix NICS would strengthen background checks and close critical loopholes.

Today I urge my friends in the Senate to pass these bills so that our Nation's schools and children can be safer.

#### RECOGNIZING RESILIENCY OF KANSANS

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Speaker, as droughts continue to worsen across Kansas, now impacting all 105 counties, we are again at the point of seeing wildfires whip across the State of Kansas. While so far none of them have come close to the size of last year's Starbuck fire, there is reason to be concerned.

Today I want to recognize the resiliency of Kansans who have been coming together to help neighbors and strangers alike, as well as soldiers from

the Kansas National Guard. These guardsmen work in cooperation with local firefighters and emergency personnel to combat fires and save people, property, and animals.

I stand today to commend their hard work and thank them for their service. These fires are a stark reminder of the devastation created by wildfires last year and provide a reminder of the importance in standing together in the face of difficulties.

#### RECOGNIZING PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN WASHINGTON'S SEVENTH DISTRICT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Washington (Ms. JAYAPAL) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of our wonderful public schools across the country.

Every child, Mr. Speaker, has the right to pursue opportunity, and through our public schools our country makes that opportunity a reality every day. Education imparts practical and invaluable skills that kids carry with them for the rest of their lives, teaches our children to become engaged members of our society and our democracy, and public education is a great equalizer, having remained a means of mobility for generations of families. I know this firsthand, Mr. Speaker. I came to the United States when I was 16 years old by myself to go to college and take advantage of all the opportunities that an American education had to offer.

For much of our Nation's history, our public schools have served this essential purpose of helping students and their families to thrive. And public schools, which serve all students, regardless of who they are, are the only institutions where the vast majority of our kids can access these benefits.

It is those schools and the teachers, professionals, and staff who serve in them—and I use “serve” very deliberately, because it is a service to be in our public schools, where teachers could earn so much more elsewhere but choose to be in the public schools because that is the place where they can help the most kids. It is those schools and those amazing successes in my own district that I want to celebrate today.

Monserrat is a teacher at Concord International Elementary School where almost 80 percent of the students are from low-income families and more than half are English language learners. Last year, Monserrat created a writing lesson using both Spanish and English. Before this lesson, most of the kids wrote at a kindergarten or a first grade level, but by the end of that lesson, every single one of her students was able to write a complex complete sentence. And over the next year Monserrat's second graders became ambassadors for Concord International, giving tours of their school in both Spanish and English. It is clear that

her investment in her students opened doors to achievement for these Seattle public school students.

Another story comes from Shorewood High School in Shoreline, Washington. Emily, a leader on her school's robotics team, wasn't interested in STEM until she got to high school because no one encouraged her to pursue it when she was younger. It wasn't until she learned about the lack of representation of women and girls in STEM that she realized that something needed to change. And last summer, Emily launched the Full STEAM Ahead Club, an all girls' mentoring group that encourages middle school girls to pursue science, technology, engineering, arts, and math. The youth mentors showed girls how important it is to engage in STEM fields early, and they work every day to expand girls' perceptions of what they can achieve, which is to say, anything.

And at Evergreen High School, a youth-led group called FEEST is working to combat food injustice in public schools. One of their campaigns recently made waves when youth leaders created the first student advisory committee with the district's nutrition services director. They provided the director with feedback on how to increase fresh and culturally relevant food items on school menus. And last month, they successfully got one of the recipes they created onto the district menu.

Through their work, these young people have developed relationships with their classmates, with decision-makers at the school district level, and they are building power and using their own innate intelligence about the issues that matter to create change in their schools and communities.

Mr. Speaker, I share these stories today to highlight how critical public schools are to my constituents and all Members. And as Members of Congress, we have a responsibility to ensure that we continue supporting our public schools. For example, public money should go to public schools. It should not be used to bankroll private entities and corporations that don't deliver excellent, inclusive, equitable instruction.

Our public schools are under attack right now from the Secretary of Education and the Trump administration. Our public schools and public money should not be used to generate a profit. And teachers, Mr. Speaker, should be teaching and not carrying guns to try to protect their students.

As tens of thousands of students across our country and here in the capital have rallied and called for attention to safety in our public schools by passing sensible gun reform legislation, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, this body has yet to address the issue of guns and safety in our schools and in our classrooms.

And if we want to support education for our kids, we should make sure that they have the right to live. That is

what we are talking about: kids who go to sleep at night wondering if they are going to cower in the corners of their classrooms the next day because somebody has a gun because Congress has not done our job.

The Trump administration and Secretary DeVos have demonstrated that they want to make sure that the money is what prevails. And, Mr. Speaker, today as we honor our public schools, we also need to honor the responsibility of Congress to protect our students and protect our public education.

#### HONORING THE LIFE OF ANDREW KISTLER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MARSHALL). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, today in Franklin, Pennsylvania, an American hero will be laid to rest. Mr. Andrew A. Kistler, past commander of the Disabled American Veterans, died on March 9 in Erie, Pennsylvania. He was 88 years old.

Andy Kistler was a tireless advocate for disabled veterans not only in Pennsylvania, but nationally. A Korean war veteran who was almost mortally wounded Christmas week in 1952, he lost both of his legs, a finger, and a concussion put him into a deep coma.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with you the words of the late Korean war medic and journalist Chris Farlekas. He helped save Andy Kistler, a 21-year-old baseball player from Franklin who arrived at the 11th Evacuation Hospital for care. I quote from this letter:

“The ward was crammed with casualties, and every helicopter that landed outside the tent brought even more. The doctor said Andy was too far gone, that he would die.

“But something inside me said no.

“I still don't completely understand my ferocity in needing Andy to live. Maybe it was because I'd seen so much death already in the 4 months that I'd been in the war, holding frightened, dying young men as they talked about home. Andy was my test case with God. If he lived, I'd believe. If not, tough.

“So for 3 days I sat with Andy, willing him to live.

“On Christmas Eve, several of the nurses, doctors, and corpsmen went through the 11th Evac, singing Christmas carols. At exactly midnight, they came to the shock ward and sang ‘Silent Night.’ It may have sounded a little ragged, off-pitch, but to me it was absolutely beautiful, angelic.

“As I listened, Andy came out of the coma, opened his eyes, grabbed my hand, and softly sang, ‘All is calm, all is bright.’ The doctors said it was a miracle.”

Andy and Chris spoke about that glorious moment in the PBS documentary, “Korean War Stories,” produced in 2002.